



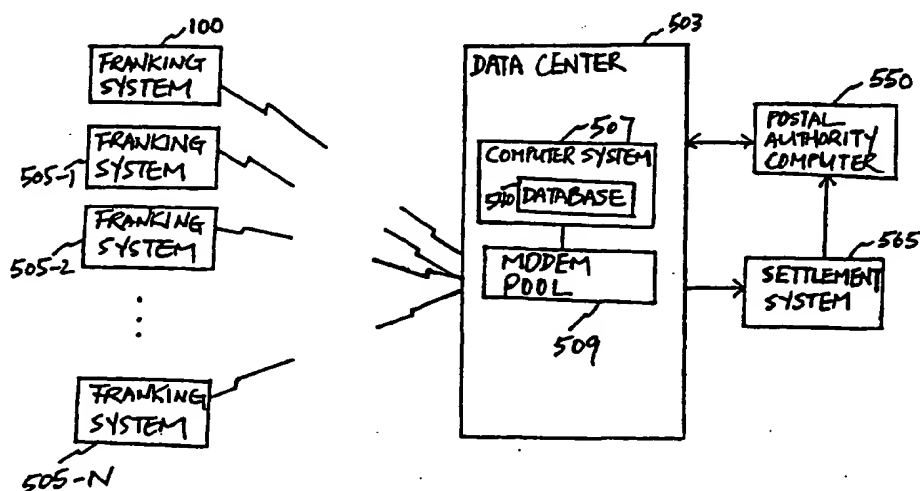
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International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : G06F 17/60	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/52614 (43) International Publication Date: 8 September 2000 (08.09.00)
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/03585</p> <p>(22) International Filing Date: 11 February 2000 (11.02.00)</p> <p>(30) Priority Data: 60/122,826 4 March 1999 (04.03.99) US</p> <p>(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): ASCOM HASLER MAILING SYSTEMS, INC. [US/US]; 19 Forest Parkway, P.O. Box 858, Shelton, CT 06484-0904 (US).</p> <p>(72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): BROOKNER, George, M. [US/US]; 11 Surrey Drive, Norwalk, CT 06851 (US). YIP, Alex, L. [US/US]; 141-15 Hoover Avenue, Briarwood, NY 11435 (US). LEARY, Brian, T. [US/US]; 352 Woodruff Road, Milford, CT 06460 (US).</p> <p>(74) Agent: YIP, Alex, L.; Londa and Traub LLP, 37th Floor, 20 Exchange Place, New York, NY 10005 (US).</p>	<p>(81) Designated States: CA, US, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).</p> <p>Published <i>With international search report.</i></p>	

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(54) Title: **TECHNIQUE FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCE CONSUMPTION**

(57) Abstract

In an arrangement for accounting for consumption of a resource, e.g., utilization of a postal service or utilities, a data center (503, 803) periodically communicates with multiple franking systems (100, 505-1, 505-2, 505-n) dispensing postage for the postal service utilization. The data center (503, 803) receives transaction records (301, 303, 305, 307, 309), where a transaction record (301, 303, 305, 307, 309) is associated with each transaction performed by the franking system (100, 505-1, 505-2, 505-n) in each period. Each record (301, 303, 305, 307, 309) includes at least the postage dispensed (305) in the associated franking transaction, and an ascending register value (307) indicating the cumulative postage dispensed. Using the received records (301, 303, 305, 307, 309), the data center (503, 803) assesses the charges during the period and causes assessed charges to be charged to an account associated with the franking system (100, 505-1, 505-2, 505-n). In addition, the data center (503, 803) forwards a copy of the received records (301, 303, 305, 307, 309) to another system (550, 565) for use by the postal authority or utility to audit the charges.